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SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: MALAWI - DPP DOMINATES PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

REF: LILONGWE 44

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11. (SBU) Summary: The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), riding the coattails of President Mutharika, won an overwhelming majority in the National Assembly in May 19 elections. The DPP won 113 out of 192 seats and will likely reach a two-thirds majority as independents join the government. The Malawi Congress Party (MCP) and United Democratic Front (UDF) both lost more than half of the seats they had won in 2004. Overall, 76% of incumbent MPs lost their bids for reelection. Independents, while fewer than in 2004, still captured 32 seats. A campaign to increase female representation succeeded in nearly doubling the number of female legislators, who now make up 21% of the legislature. Comment: While the large DPP majority will bring stability to the legislature, civil society is concerned about the risk of the National Assembly becoming a rubber stamp for government policies and bills. End Summary

#### SWEEPING VICTORY FOR DPP IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

12. (SBU) The DPP, riding the coattails of President Mutharika's presidential victory, won 113 seats out of 192 contested in the May 19 election. The opposition MCP and UDF won 27 and 17 seats, respectively, cutting their numbers in half from 2004. The magnitude of the DPP victory was unexpected, as many analysts believed the MCP and UDF had more seasoned political machines at the grassroots level. The UDF's showing was so poor that its share of Parliamentary seats fell below the 10% threshold required for state funding for political parties. Two seats remain up for grabs due to a candidate's death and the election of Joyce Banda as Vice-President. These seats will be filled through by-elections within 60 days.

#### INDEPENDENTS FARE WELL

13. (SBU) Independent candidates, although capturing seven fewer seats than in 2004, outdistanced all opposition parties with 32 seats. Poorly run primaries in all major political parties led to 41% of candidates running as independents (reftel). Most of the winning independents were formerly members of the DPP and are likely to return to the party. These prodigal MPs should push the DPP over the two-thirds supermajority the party would need to pass constitutional amendments. After the elections, President Mutharika acknowledged that the large number of "independent" DPP candidacies was a sign of poor intra-party democracy, and vowed to create governing structures for the DPP that are more transparent.

#### ONLY ONE IN FOUR INCUMBENTS RETURN

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¶4. (U) Incumbency was once again a disadvantage for parliamentary candidates, as voters returned only 26% of incumbents to the National Assembly. In both the elections of 1999 and 2004, over 70% of incumbents lost as well. Malawian voters' expectations of what their MPs can do for them directly are often unreasonably high. The DPP's conquest of former MCP and UDF constituencies was also clearly a factor in this high turnover. Some commentators have suggested that voters consciously decided to give President Mutharika the Parliamentary majority he lacked in his first term.

#### BIG NAMES FALL

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¶5. (SBU) A large number of senior government and opposition figures failed to win their Parliamentary seats. Among the big names that lost were five cabinet ministers - Davies Katsonga (Labor), Clement Khembo (Disabled and Elderly), Ernest Malenga (Home Affairs), Ted Kalebe (Energy and Mines), Callista Chimombo (Tourism) - and twelve deputy ministers. Foreign Minister Joyce Banda was reelected, but as the new Vice President, she will give up her seat in the National Assembly and her ministerial portfolio as well. The entire national executive council of the UDF also lost, along with the MCP's Secretary General. Despite MCP's other losses, John Tembo successfully held his seat in Dedza. The rest of the presidential candidates who also ran for Parliament, including independent James Nyondo, were defeated. While Tembo's running mate, Brown Mpinganjira, also lost his parliamentary election, former President Muluzi's son, Atupele, retained his seat. With the UDF's losses, Atupele Muluzi, a Western-educated lawyer, becomes one of the highest profile UDF members in Parliament and potential future leader of the party.

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#### CAMPAIGN HELPS INCREASE WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT

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¶6. (U) The number of female MPs increased to 42 as women now won 21% of National Assembly seats. A "50/50 campaign" by civil society organizations around the country played a large part in the increase. The campaign, aimed at achieving gender balance in the legislature, trained female candidates in how to campaign and provided funding without regard to political affiliation. The "50/50 Campaign" was inspired by the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) declaration in 2005 for 50/50 (male/female) representation in the sub-region's legislatures by the year 2020. Women candidates accounted for 20% of all parliamentary candidates in the election.

¶7. (SBU) Comment: The DPP's landslide victory will bring order and coherence to the previously fractious National Assembly, but civil society groups have already stated concerns that the DPP might use its majority to turn the National Assembly into a rubber stamp for President Mutharika's initiatives. The loss of several GOM ministers from Parliament should not adversely affect U.S. cooperation with Malawi. Key partners such as Minister of Finance Goodall Gondwe and Minister of Health Khumbo Kachali survived their Parliament races, although they may be reassigned to new portfolios in the new Cabinet. End Comment.

BODDE